



# Flash Appeal Ein El Hilweh Crisis – Addressing Immediate Needs

August 2023



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The development of the UNRWA flash appeal was facilitated by the Department of Planning, UNRWA

## About UNRWA

UNRWA is the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The United Nations General Assembly established UNRWA in 1949 with a mandate to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to registered Palestine refugees in the Agency's area of operations pending a just and lasting solution to their plight. UNRWA operates in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Tens of thousands of Palestine refugees who lost their homes and livelihoods due to the 1948 conflict continue to be displaced and in need of support, nearly 75 years on. UNRWA helps Palestine Refugees achieve their full potential in human development through quality services it provides in education, health care, relief and social services, protection, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions.

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**Cover photo:** The aftermath of armed clashes inside Ein El Hilweh camp, Lebanon. © 2023 UNRWA Photo

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# Introduction

On 30 July 2023, armed clashes erupted in the Ein El Hilweh camp in south Lebanon. According to media reports, by 3 August, 13 people - including one person who was not involved in the fighting - had been killed and over 4,000 forced to flee their homes.<sup>1</sup> Active fighting ceased on 3 August, but the situation remains extremely tense. As of 23 August, two UNRWA school compounds, which provide education for 5,900 children, remained occupied by armed actors and have been severely damaged. As of today, UNRWA does not yet have access to all areas of the camp.

Ein El Hilweh camp is the largest Palestine refugee camp in Lebanon, hosting nearly 55,000 registered Palestine refugees. UNRWA runs eight schools (located in two compounds) and two health centres in the camp. The Agency also provides cash assistance and supports basic infrastructure, environmental health and waste management-related services.

This localised escalation of violence in the camp, which is located within the country's third largest city, needs to be understood in the context of regional, intra-Palestinian and host country political dynamics. The camp has come to be a magnifier of different actors vying for power and control. Humanitarian needs amongst camp residents are high and rising, driven largely by systemic discrimination over generations, failed governance structures, unprecedented financial and economic crises affecting the country, and the social and economic inequality experienced by Palestine refugees.

This Appeal covers new humanitarian needs triggered by the Ein El Hilweh crisis of August 2023. Funds required come in addition to those included in the Lebanon component of the [UNRWA 2023 Syria, Lebanon and Jordan Emergency Appeal](#), which seeks to reduce the overall vulnerability and address the humanitarian needs of the wider Palestine refugee population in Lebanon, including those who have fled from Syria.

In line with the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights and its specific focus on rights in times

of crisis, UNRWA commits to ensuring that human rights and protection remain at the centre of the response, and that advocacy with various duty bearers is strengthened in efforts to prevent the recurrence of violence and mitigate its impact.

UNRWA is also strengthening its coordination with humanitarian partners and local authorities on all elements of the response to the situation in Ein El Hilweh, including needs assessments, advocacy and programming.

In order to respond to the most pressing humanitarian and early recovery needs arising from the Ein El Hilweh crisis, UNRWA seeks **US\$ 15,467,309** through this Appeal, covering activities for a period of six months. The response under this Appeal contributes to the Agency's strategic objectives of mitigating the effects of humanitarian emergencies on Palestine refugees and providing services in a dignified and safe manner. However, UNRWA must also play a stabilising role more broadly amongst refugees and Lebanese host communities and hence this Appeal complements the underlying, unmet needs highlighted in the UNRWA 2023 Syria, Lebanon and Jordan Emergency Appeal, which is only 21 per cent funded as of July 2023.

We underscore for all our partners that the activities presented in this Appeal can only be implemented if the Agency's Programme Budget receives contributions in the amount required to sustain staffing and infrastructure essential to the delivery of health, education, relief, environmental health and protection services. Requirements are based on initial rapid assessments to accessible areas of the camp as well as socio-political and economic analysis of the overall situation in the context of Lebanon. As the context is in constant flux and more specific damage assessments will have to be carried out when access to the camp is possible, financial requirements may need to be updated in due course. The cost of repair and potential reconstruction of UNRWA school buildings and refugee shelters in Ein El Hilweh camp do not form part of this Appeal.





A shelter destroyed in Ein El Hilweh camp, Lebanon. © 2023 UNRWA Photo by Adham Shehabi



# Situation overview

Episodes of violence and clashes are recurrent in Ein El Hilweh camp. The current escalation of July and August 2023 is understood to be connected to violence that took place in March during which members of opposing Palestinian groups clashed. Following intense mediation by members of the Lebanese government, calm was restored in the camp. However, clashes resumed between the same groups in July, following the killing of an armed group's military leader and four of his bodyguards by opposing fighters.

In this volatile context other regional, host country and intra-Palestinian dynamics are interplaying, exacerbating further localized tensions.

During the recent armed confrontation that started on 30 July, and after the ceasefire that was brokered on 3 August,<sup>2</sup> several incidents have been recorded in contravention of applicable international law. This includes the use of schools by armed actors and of school grounds as storage and ammunition depots during school holidays, and deliberate attacks on UNRWA school compounds. Such actions infringe the privileges and immunities of the United Nations and UNRWA, compromise the neutrality of UNRWA installations and generate deep concerns in line with Security Council Resolution 2143 on Children and Armed Conflict.<sup>3</sup>

The ongoing conflict dynamics are grounded in decades of structural discrimination of Palestine refugees in Lebanon, which prevent them from exiting a poverty cycle that is specific to their refugee status. They are barred from accessing the labour market of white-collar jobs and from acquiring immovable property. At the same time, recurrent displacement, destruction of camps and the effects of inter-generationally transmitted trauma and re-traumatisation have left this population deeply exhausted and antagonised.

The symptoms of constant stress are reflected in unusually high rates of non-communicable diseases, which weigh on health care and hospitalization services, while rendering those expected to provide income dependent on assistance. UNRWA is more than ever the main provider of humanitarian assistance and basic services for Palestine refugees in the country.

This situation coalesces with the ongoing economic crisis in Lebanon, resulting in dramatic impacts on the living conditions of Palestine refugees, exacerbating their vulnerabilities and compounding existing challenges. Palestine refugee families struggle to afford necessities such as food, medication and electricity. Half of the Palestine refugee population in Lebanon lives in one of the 12 official camps or in the unofficial gatherings, which are usually in their vicinity. Camps are characterized by isolation and segregation from their social and economic environment, overcrowding, substandard shelters and infrastructure, high rates of unemployment and poor health. This contributes to endemic poverty and social marginalization.

The very high rates of poverty among Palestine refugees, which stood at 80 per cent in March 2023, are the result of decades of structural discrimination and the ongoing economic crisis. Poverty is now affecting the fourth generation of Palestine refugees in Lebanon who are unable to accumulate and preserve wealth and to enter middle class income categories outside of UNRWA employment opportunities.

These cumulative stress factors contribute to continued cycles of violence within the high-pressure environment of the camps. The first quarter of 2023 alone saw 13 serious incidents in camps – eight of which took place in Ein El Hilweh, demonstrating the heightened tensions within this particular camp.





Damage to shops incurred during armed clashes in Ein El Hilweh camp, Lebanon. © 2023 UNRWA  
Photo by Adham Shehabi



# Humanitarian and early recovery needs

The actions identified by UNRWA under this Appeal come with the understanding that humanitarian actions alone cannot end humanitarian needs or address the root causes of armed conflict, achieve development goals or sustain positive peace. Whilst UNRWA is therefore prioritizing actions that respond to the specific crisis in Ein El Hilweh in this Appeal, the Agency also draws attention to other urgent, unmet needs outlined in its 2023 Emergency Appeal. Together, these two appeals are designed to address the immediate humanitarian needs of Palestine refugees and build their resilience to allow them to better cope with the current crisis.

Within this Appeal, UNRWA aims to respond to the crisis in Ein El Hilweh by ensuring that:

- the right to quality education and psychosocial support is safeguarded;
- access to safe shelter is sustained through one-off cash assistance for persons whose shelters have become uninhabitable;
- access to basic public and social infrastructure including schools and water networks is protected;
- vulnerable families in the affected area are supported through cash assistance.



A Palestine refugee family sought refuge at the UNRWA Askalan School in Mieħ Mieħ camp as a consequence of the conflict in Ein El Hilweh camp, Lebanon. © 2023 UNRWA  
Photo by Farah Fahad



The Agency plans to respond to immediate needs in the camp by addressing the following humanitarian needs:

**Safeguarding the right and timely access to education and learning.** UNRWA recognises that equal and inclusive access to education is a basic human right that should be sustained, including during emergencies. Children not accessing this right are exposed to protection risks including child labour, child recruitment, early marriage and all kinds of violence, among other risks. Securing and preparing alternative safe schooling spaces outside the camp, as schools in the camps continue to be occupied by armed militants, are high priorities for ensuring that 5,900 girls and boys have their right to quality education protected. This will allow them to start the new school year without delay.

Additionally, there are needs for coverage of rental costs for the alternative school locations, provision of education materials and supplies including pedagogical resources, combined with adequate number of teaching positions and counselling services to address the psycho-social needs of students. Back to school kits and stationery will need to be provided, with some support to be provided by partners, especially for those who lost these items due to the conflict in the camp.

**Cash for shelter.** While discussions on reconstruction within Ein El Hilweh require the engagement of a multiplicity of stakeholders, UNRWA will seek to provide an immediate response to urgent shelter needs through one-off cash assistance to help refugees whose homes have become uninhabitable due to the conflict.

**Ensure continued access to basic public and social infrastructure.** Recovery of basic public and social infrastructure is a critical component of the response.

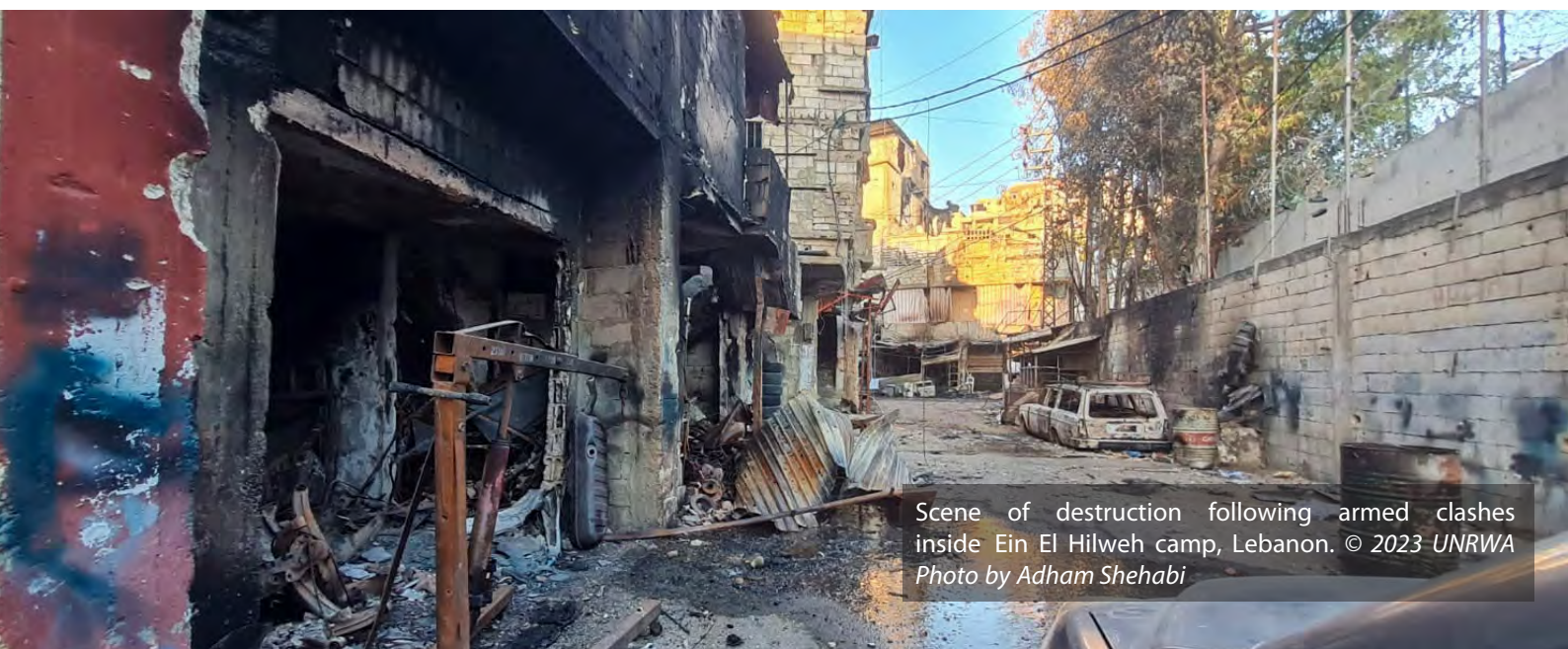
This includes the rehabilitation of water and electricity networks; the rehabilitation of UNRWA installations in the camp, including its two health centres; and unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearance and rubble removal, to support a safe and dignified return of communities to Ein El Hilweh.

**Addressing basic needs through cash assistance to Palestine refugees affected by the conflict.** Providing the conflict-affected community with cash assistance is essential so that they can meet their basic needs. Socio-economic data collected in early 2023 indicates that multiple rounds of assistance are producing a tangible impact on households across the community through economic multiplier effects as the assistance is distributed consistently in US currency.

**The centrality of protection is a cross-cutting principle underpinning all activities and across programmes.** Child protection interventions will be expanded, as part of a range of planned protection and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services, including protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.<sup>4</sup>

UNRWA will apply a gender, age and inclusive approach to the provision of assistance by taking into account the differing needs and situations of men, women, girls and boys. Interventions under this Appeal will also be guided by the UNRWA Environmental Sustainability Policy, to minimize damage to the environment whilst protecting Palestine refugees from future environmental hazards.

Furthermore, since the beginning of the crisis and as a foundation for this Appeal, UNRWA has engaged partners and the wider humanitarian, development and political community in a solution-oriented dialogue with a view to identifying and developing programmes as opposed to individual projects as well as flexibility on all sides to go beyond business-as-usual.



Scene of destruction following armed clashes inside Ein El Hilweh camp, Lebanon. © 2023 UNRWA  
Photo by Adham Shehabi

## Funding requirements (in US\$)

Intervention	Targeted Population	Requirements (US\$)
Access to education	5,900 students	1,650,000
Cash for shelter	250 households <sup>5</sup> with uninhabitable shelters comprising an estimated 1,000 individuals	333,000
Rehabilitation of basic public infrastructure (water and electricity networks)	55,000 camp residents	666,000
Rehabilitation of UNRWA installations	55,000 camp residents	166,500
Rubble and debris removal	6,000 individuals based in areas of active conflict	388,500
Risk awareness, safety and security	55,000 camp residents	888,000
Cash assistance for conflict affected Palestine refugees	59,775 (receiving three rounds of cash assistance)	11,138,879
Programme management, support and coordination	—	236,430
<b>Total</b>		<b>15,467,309</b>



# Interventions

## Access to education

Based on the Agency's initial assessment, four of UNRWA's schools inside the camp have suffered extensive structural damage, and will not be able to accommodate over 3,200 children for the beginning of the school year in October 2023. Another four schools for 2,700 children have been occupied since 19 August by armed fighters. UNRWA requires the necessary funding to put in place a double shift system in other schools in the vicinity/outside of the camp. This will be a temporary arrangement for the scholastic year 2023/24 until the security situation in the camp and the possibility of rehabilitating and/or reconstructing the currently occupied and damaged school buildings that are located at the centre of the conflict becomes clear.

It is critical to note that all eight schools for 5,900 children located in the camp remain occupied by armed actors and inaccessible to UNRWA. As such, it has not been possible to conduct damage assessments at the time of the release of this Appeal. The use of these schools by armed groups is a violation of the privileges and immunities of UN premises under international law, which compromises the neutrality of UNRWA installations and undermines the safety and security of staff and Palestine refugees.

The location of these schools, at the centre of a recurrent conflict zone, may also have to be revisited with the help of a peace and conflict impact assessment and alternatives explored elsewhere so that safe education can be offered on a continuous basis to children of the Ein El Hilweh camp in the future. Reconstruction costs of one newly designed school only is estimated at US\$ 2 million. These costs are not included in this Appeal.

Recognising that children and youth in the camp are profoundly impacted by the socio-economic and political crisis in addition to a widespread sense of insecurity and violence, UNRWA will ensure schools have adequate personnel to respond to the learning needs of children as well as effective and accessible counselling, psycho-social support and recreational services to address the emotional and behavioral needs faced by the students. Back to school kits will be provided by partners, supplemented as needed by additional stationery funded through this Appeal.

Finally, to ensure children have full access to education and to mitigate the risk of drop out, transportation arrangements for children to more distant locations

will have to be secured, including for children with disabilities.

## Cash for shelter

Cash assistance will be offered as a one-off payment to support families with uninhabitable houses. This will be in the form of US\$ 1,200 per family to cover approximately six months of expenditure. This intervention will target approximately 250 households, but the number may increase following a full-scale damage assessment. Assistance will be contingent upon an assessment of the status of damaged or destroyed homes by UNRWA engineers.

## Rehabilitation of basic public infrastructure: water and electricity networks

As a result of the fighting, water and electricity networks and facilities have sustained significant damage, impacting the capacity of the camp community to access safe, clean water and to safely discharge wastewater. UNRWA seeks to rehabilitate the camp water supply and wastewater infrastructure as well as the damaged main electric cables, secondary cables, household connections and transformers in the affected areas.

## Rehabilitation of UNRWA installations

Key to enabling a safe return to normalcy in the camp is the capacity of refugees to access basic social services provided by UNRWA. As a result of the armed conflict, a number of UNRWA installations - including one health centre, the Camp Community Service Office and the Relief and Social Service Office - have been damaged.

UNRWA will rehabilitate and repair damaged installations to restore access to life-sustaining services. Wherever possible, the Agency will look at opportunities for greening and 'Building Back Better'. This will mean the use of alternate building materials with improved specifications, the application of energy-saving approaches and addressing accessibility issues.

## Debris and rubble removal

There are considerable amounts of debris and rubble throughout the conflict affected sectors of the camp. Their removal is a pre-requisite for safe access and return to affected areas. Critical activities include collection and removal of debris to approved dumping sites.





Scene of destruction following armed clashes inside Ein El Hilweh camp, Lebanon. © 2023 UNRWA Photo by Abdel Nasser Al-Hadri



A shop damaged during armed clashes in Ein El Hilweh camp, Lebanon. © 2023 UNRWA photo by Adham Shehabi



## Safety and security and risk awareness

Due to the type of devices used during the hostilities in Ein El Hilweh refugee camp, there remains a significant risk of injury and death from explosive remnants of war and UXO. There is a critical need for risk assessments and mitigation measures by experts in the field as well as awareness raising and risk mitigation for the general public, UNRWA staff and partners. UNRWA, in collaboration with the Lebanese Mine Action Centre and specialized agencies, will mitigate risks to Palestine refugees, Agency staff and other humanitarian personnel through improved safety measures, clearance of UXO polluted areas and enhanced risk awareness, including identifying and mitigating risks posed by UXO. UNRWA will also offer support to fire brigades and the Palestine Civil Defense in the camp.

## Cash assistance to conflict-affected Palestine refugees

In addition to emergency cash support for households to rehabilitate and repair affected shelters in Ein El Hilweh, UNRWA also underscores the importance of supporting conflict-affected populations with regular

cash assistance in the coming six months to achieve life sustaining and stabilization outcomes.

Cash support will be distributed to 59,775 vulnerable Palestine refugees, 55 per cent of whom are children. Both Palestine refugees in Lebanon and Palestinian refugees from Syria living in the area affected by the conflict, in and around the camp, will be targeted. This assistance is designed to complement cash distributions planned under the Agency's 2023 Emergency Appeal for Syria, Lebanon and Jordan.

## Programme management and coordination

To ensure the timely implementation and the effective management of the interventions in this Appeal, enhanced field, technical and management capacity is essential. Where needed, additional temporary staff and material support will be deployed.

Recognising the complexity of the environment in which UNRWA staff operate, tailored staff care will be offered, in addition to UNRWA's regular psycho-social staff support, with the aim of supporting a healthy and productive workforce as well as sustaining wellbeing amongst staff.



UNRWA relief and social services staff engaging in their routine activities, which encompass providing psychosocial support, managing the registration process, and assisting refugees enrolled in the social safety network. © 2023 UNRWA Photo by Zahraa Hodorj

# Endnotes

- 1 [Fighting leaves half of Ain el-Hilweh off-limits, UN says — Naharnet](#)
- 2 [Situation Report 4# on the situation in Ein El Hilweh, Lebanon, UNRWA](#)
- 3 Adopted on 7 March 2014, United Nations Security Council Resolution 2143 calls for increased efforts to protect children in armed conflict, building on earlier resolutions including Resolution 1612, which established a monitoring and reporting mechanism on the use of child soldiers, Resolution 2143 emphasizes a new element that is the use of schools by armed forces. See: [Resolution 2143 \(unscr.com\)](#)
- 4 MHPSS services will also extend to UNRWA staff working in Ein El Hilweh camp.
- 5 Though subject to further assessment when the camp is fully accessible.





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وكالة الأمم المتحدة لإغاثة وتشغيل  
اللاجئين الفلسطينيين في الشرق الأدنى